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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Bureau of Agricultural Economics Washington 25, D. C.

FARM POPULATION ESTIMATES
January 1945

In January 1945, according to estimates of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, 25,190,000 persons were living on the farms of the United States. This is the smallest number of farm residents in the entire 35-year period for which estimates of the farm population are available. However, the farm population decreased by only 331,000, or 1.3 percent during the year, the smallest annual net decrease since the United States entered the war in 1941. After marked decreases during 1941, 1942, and 1943, the net decrease during 1944 was reduced to approximately the same annual rate that prevailed during the pre-war period 1935-39. In four of the nine major geographic divisions, there were actually slight net gains in the number of persons living on farms during 1944.

The heavy migration from farms during the early war years had so reduced the reserve of potential migrants from the farm population that civilian migration from farms necessarily slackened in 1944. Other factors which may have tended to reduce migration from farms were wage controls in industry, the rising level of farm wages, and uncertainty as to the duration of war industry work. The decreasing rate of migration, together with the ending of the war in Europe and the beginning of partial reconversion, suggest that the level of farm population will remain rather stable during 1945.

In the 5 years since January 1940, the farm population of the United States decreased from a level of 30,269,000 persons to 25,190,000, a net decrease of 16.8 percent. Migration of farm people to cities, towns, and villages occasioned by the wartime expansion in nonagricultural employment was the chief factor in the great decrease of farm population since 1940. Enlistments and inductions of young people living on farms, including both those employed at farm work and those working at nonfarm jobs or attending school, were the second most important factor. A minor part of the decrease was due to reclassification of some dwelling places as "nonfarm," because agricultural operations had ceased, or because the farm land previously attached to the residence had been consolidated with another nearby farm. Although the amount of natural increase has been smaller each year since 1941, the excess of births over deaths in the farm population has continued to offset a considerable part of civilian migration and entrances into the armed forces each year.

The following changes are estimated to have occurred in the farm population during the period between January 1940 and January 1945:

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- (1) A net loss of 5,136,000 persons of all ages who either moved away from farms to cities, towns, or villages (civilian migration), or who were living on places which are no longer classified as farms because agricultural operations have ceased;
- (2) A net loss of 1,850,000 persons who were living on farms at the time they enlisted or were inducted into the armed forces;
- (3) As net addition of 1,907,000 persons through the excess of births over deaths in the farm population;
- (4) As a result of these changes from specific causes, an over-all net decrease of 5,079,000 persons.

The farm population has decreased since 1940 in all parts of the country, but the several regions have shown very different rates of loss. The heaviest relative losses occurred in the West South Central States — a 25-percent decrease during the 5 years. The East South Central and Mountain divisions had decreases of about 20 percent; the West North Central and South Atlantic divisions showed decreases of about 15 percent of the population living on farms in 1940. The divisions showing the smallest decrease in farm population were those which contain important centers of war industry. The New England, Middle Atlantic, East North Central, and Pacific States had decreases of only 12 percent in their farm population between 1940 and 1945.

In contrast to the changes during 1941, 1942, and 1943, when all major geographic divisions of the United States experienced marked decreases in farm population, four of the major geographic divisions actually showed small increases during 1944. These were the same four which showed the smallest decreases for the entire 5-year period: the New England, Middle Atlantic, East North Central, and Pacific States. The increase in farm population in these areas was due in part to availability of nonagricultural employment for farm people living near cities, which removed the most common reason for migration, and in part to a spilling over into farm residences of persons unable to get houses in congested war production centers.

The course of the farm population since 1916, when the impact of World War I was reflected in the level of farm population of the United States, reflects important trends and cyclical changes in the Nation's economy, and has important implications for the level of farm population in the postwar period. In years preceding 1916, the farm population was still growing, although it was supplying many migrants to cities, towns, and villages, who partly offset the high rate of natural increase on farms. In 1916, the farm population reached its highest level — 32,530,000 persons. Though there were minor irregularities in certain years, a consistent downward trend, averaging a net loss of 170,000 a year, occurred between 1916 and 1930, a period of relative prosperity with nonagricultural jobs usually available to migrants from farms. This reduced the level of farm population to 30,169,000 by 1930.

With continued progress of mechanization in agriculture, the downward trend in farm population might have continued had it not been for the severe economic depression in the early thirties. The lack of available nonagricultural job opportunities dammed up on farms many youths who normally would have migrated and led to some return to farms of recent migrants. It required the 7 years, 1933-39 for the farm population to lose the abnormal expansion of nearly 2 million which occurred during the 3 years 1930-32 when migration was not offsetting the increase in the farm population due to the excess of births over deaths. The migration from farms during the war years has represented in large part a telescoping into a few years of migration which was repressed during the preceding decade.

In spite of the wartime decrease in farm residents and farm workers, agricultural production has reached new highs each year during the war. The prospect for a rather rapid pick-up in further mechanization immediately after the war means that the downward trend in the number of agricultural workers required will probably continue rather than be reversed after the war. Hence the vocational opportunities in agriculture will be smaller than in the past. The improved composition of the farm working force after millions of young, able-bodied men are returned from the armed forces to civilian pursuits should more than offset the expected reductions in hours worked per week by agricultural workers.

A larger than proportionate amount of wartime migration from farms was from farms in the South, where great underemployment of farm workers existed before the war. Thus a greater than average reduction of farm population occurred in those areas which needed to lose people. Between 1940 and 1945, the farm population decreased by 3,203,000 or 20 percent in the South as compared with a decrease of 1,876,000 or 13 percent in the farm population outside the South. Nevertheless, in 1945 the South still had 52 percent of the total farm population with a much smaller proportion of the Nation's agricultural production or productive resources other than labor.

The adjustments which have occurred in agriculture and the farm population during the war have been in the direction of a better balance between population and resources. The improvement in the ratio of the farm population to agricultural resources has been accompanied by a rise in the level of living of farm people, reflected by the much higher per capita income figures after adjustments are made for increased prices farmers must pay for commodities used in production and in family living. Even though the peak wartime levels of income may not be reached in postwar years, much of the gain in improved levels of living for farm people may be retained if the farm population remains far below the prewar level through a migration rate from farms at least equal to the rate of natural increase.

Source of Material

Estimates of moves to and from farms and other types of changes occurring in the farm population during 1944 were made on the basis of reports from approximately 12,000 farmers all over the country who gave information for 60,000 farms. These estimates were adjusted to the level of farm population of the United States as estimated jointly by the

Bureau of the Census and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics on the basis of enumerative surveys. Releases on the farm population and related information are being made by the two Bureaus in a cooperative Census-BAE Series. Copies of the cooperative releases may be obtained without charge by request to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C.

Table 1.-Annual estimates of the farm population, births and deaths occurring in the farm population, and number of persons moving to and from farms United States, 1940-45

ation:From	forces (000)		001.	100	ı	ŧ.	1	
: To To	:armed :armed otal :forces (000) (000)		-300	-605	-859	-211	-75	
	: (000)		-2.00	-505	-859	-211	-75	
	: farms 1/:Total :forces: forces (000) (000) (000)		-1,293	-1,982	-2,739	-1,960	-1,296	
nge through migration	forms (000)		817	766	819	814	069	
Change through migration	/: Total 1/:		947 :	\$86-	÷1,920	-1,146	909-	•
	Total 1/		929-	£67°T÷	-2,779	-1,357	-681	
Change through :	Deaths (000)	,	-246	-255	-270	-285	-296	
	Births (000)		165	019	099	702	969	
Change natural	Total (000)		345	355	390	417	, 00 [†] /	•
Farm popula-	tion :	25,190	25,521	26,659	26,048	29,988	30,269	
	Year	1945	1944	1943	1942	1941	1940	

Including persons who have not moved but who are no longer in the farm population because agricultural operations have ceased on the place where they are living. Estimates of changes in the farm population during 1942 and of the level of farm population in January 1943 for the United States were revised in November 1944. Estimates for prior years are identical with those released in March 1943.

Table 2.- Annual estimates of the farm population, births and deaths occurring in the farm population, and number of persons moving to and from farms for the United States and geographic divisions, 1940-1945

		•		1940 "15	/ -/			
,		: Change through : natural increase :			Change through migration			
Area and year	: Farm : population : on : January 1 :	:	Births:	Deaths:	Total	farms	From Tarms	Change through farm-to- farm movement 3/
New England	(000)	(000)	(000)	(000)	(000)	(000)		(000)
1945 1944 1943 1942 1941 1940 <u>4</u> /	544 540 567 608 614 617	4 · 6 · 4 · 5 · 3	11 12 11 12 11	-7 -6 -7 -7 -8	'+2 -31 -43 -10 -4	31 37· 23 28 27	-29 -68 -66 -38 -31	-2 -2 -2 -1 -2
Middle Atlan	tic							
1945 1944 1943 1942 1941 1940 <u>4</u> /	1,578 1,575 1,619 1,728 1,768 1,772	14 15 14 13 12	33 33 33 32 32	_19 -18 -19 -19 -20	-19 -65 -121 -56 -29	64 74 39 60 51	-83 -139 -160 -116 -80	8 6 -2 3 13
East North C	entral							
1945 1944 1943 1942 1941 1940 <u>4</u> /	4,033 4,000 4,146 4,465 4,574 4,589	41 · 30 · 36 41 38	83 78 85 85 84	-42 -48 -49 -44 -46	-33 -198 -382 -178 -83	171 183 157 152 132	-204 -381 -539 -330 -215	25 22 27 28 30
West North C	entral			,				
1945 1944 1943 1942 1941 1940 <u>4</u> /	3,989 4,064 4,220 4,528 4,641 4,676	60 60 60 59 53	94 93 99 95 89	-34 -33 -39 -36 -36	-149 -230 -379 -199 -98	124 144 135 114 94	-273 -374 -514 -313 -192	14 114 11 27 10
South Atlant	ic						,	. 1
1945 1944 1943 1942 1941 1940 <u>4</u> /	5,067 5,164 5,376 5,822 5,988 6,025	78 80 100 108 102	128 130 151 168 166	-50 -50 -51 -60 -64	-128 -231 -500 -243 -128	126 148 117 124 104	-254 -379 -617 -367 -232	-47 -61 -46 -31 -11

(Continued)

Table 2.- Annual estimates of the farm population, births and deaths occurring in the farm population, and number of persons moving to and from farms for the United States and geographic divisions,

1940-1945 (Continued)

	:	: Change through : natural increase			Change through migration				
Area and year	Farm population on January 1	: :	Births:	Deaths		To 1	From clarms	Change through farm-to- farm	
East South ((000) Central	(000)	(000)	(000)			(000)	movement 3/ (000)	
1945 1944 1943 1942 1941 1940 <u>4</u> /	4,251 4,331 4,557 4,972 5,174 5,238	66 74 79 91 91	107 117 123 143 143	-41 -43 -44 -52 -52	-129 295 491 283 137	119 118 90 90 84	-248 -413 -581 -373 -221	-17 -5 -3 -10 -18	
West South Central									
1945 1944 1943 1942 1941 1940 <u>4</u> /	3,750 3,881 4,178 4,700 4,914 5,008	75 75 75 78	.93 107 116 120 124	-37 -38 -41 -45 -46	-197 -376 -589 -261 -142	126 180 132 136 111	-323 -556 -721 -397 -253	10 10 -8 -28 -30	
Mountain									
1945 1944 1943 1942 1941 1940 <u>4</u> /	891 907 929 1,041 1,095 1,102	13 12 13 16 15	21 20 22 26 26	-8 -8 -9 -10 -11	-34 -39 -137 -80 -32	63 95 59 45 37	-97 -134 -196 -125 -69	5 5 12 10 10	
Pacific								*	
1945 1944 1943 1942 1941 1940 <u>4</u> /	1,087 1,059 1,067 1,184 1,220 1,242	13 9 9 9 8	21 20 20 21 21	-8 -11 -11 -12 -13	+11 -28 -137 -47 -28	93 115 67 65 50	-82 -143 -204 -112 -78	4 11 11 2 -2 -2	

^{1/} Includes persons who entered the armed forces.

Estimates of changes in the farm population during 1942 and of the level of farm population in January 1943 for major geographic divisions have been rerevised. Estimates for prior years are identical with these released in March 1943.

Includes persons who returned from the armed forces.

The net movement of persons from farms in one geographic division

to farms in other divisions.

Farm population January 1, adjusted on the basis of Census enumeration of April 1.

